

# Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

Ventura County Fairgrounds  
31st District Agricultural Association - 10 W. Harbor Blvd. - Ventura, CA 93001 - (805) 648-3376  
Website: venturacountyfair.org Contact: Heidi Ortiz, CEO

**Tuesday, April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2026 at 9:00 a.m.**  
**Ventura County Fairgrounds – Derby Club**

## **I. Call to Order**

### **Roll Call**

### **Declaration of Recusal or Conflict of Interest**

The meeting convened at 9:01 a.m. and called to order by President Ceja.

**Directors present:** President, Guillermo Rodriguez Ceja Jr., Vice President, Gloria Martinez, Betsy Chess, Leslie Cornejo, Miriam Mack, Dan Long and Shanté Morgan-Carter.

**Absent:** Leah Lacayo

**Staff present:** Heidi Ortiz, CEO, Jason Amelio, Deputy Manager, Emilee Inez, Exhibit Supervisor, Madalyn Johnson, Concessions Manager, Megan Hook, PR & Marketing, and Karen Pineda, Executive Assistant.

**Guests Present:** Jessica Anderson, Sharon Ferro, James Ford, Mark Hartley, John Hecht, Patrick Maynard, Chris Morgan, Tom McDonnell, and Scott Shacklett.

There were no conflicts of interest with any of the Board members that were present.

## **II. Pledge of Allegiance**

President Ceja led all present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

## **III. Welcome and Introduction of Guests**

Invitation for the public to introduce themselves (not mandatory).

A. CEO Ortiz introduced the new sales manager, Sara Gutierrez.

## **IV. Public Comment on Items Not on the Agenda**

There were no public comments.

## **V. Presentations**

### **A. Oak View Group**

Tom McDonnell, Vice President of Business Development and Client Relations for Hospitality, shared that there are different partnership options available to the fairgrounds. Mr. McDonnell spoke to OVG's extended partnerships with the LA County

Fair, Cal Expo, OC Fair, and Texas State Fair. Mr. McDonnell recommends an RFP process to investigate potential partnership options.

Chris Morgan, Regional Vice President, introduced various members of leadership including, Scott Shacklett, James Ford, and Jessica Anderson. Mr. Morgan highlighted the success of OVG’s operational improvements for last year’s Oktoberfest. He shared that they are hoping to present various ideas to the board through an RFP process.

Scott Shacklett, General Manager of LA County Fair and OVG Fair Consultant, shared how instrumental an in-house model is for resources. He spoke to how helpful OVG’s resources have been in supporting food and beverage operations at their fairgrounds.

Jessica Anderson, VP of Client Relations, stated that OVG has a depth of resources and financial backing to retain talent and a full leadership team. She spoke about the operational risks during turnovers and transitions. Ms. Anderson also spoke about the financial and execution risks when considering an in-house model.

President Ceja stated that there is a public comment on this agenda item.

John Hecht, Member of the Ventura County Fairgrounds Foundation, introduced various members of the foundation and expanded on their local ties to the community as well as their business experience. He expressed that they are here to benefit the fair.

B. Blue Pacific Event Services – Patrick Maynard, CEO

Mr. Maynard gave a presentation on security operations for this year’s fair. He shared that his team is coordinating with the existing security contractors and are working to streamline staffing plans to try reducing costs. He shared that ongoing oversight of contractors will continue throughout the duration of fair. Along with staff and customer safety, he emphasized that customer experience is also a priority for the teams this year. Mr. Maynard encouraged the board to develop a list of suggestions post-fair, to discuss improvements for next year. He expressed that safety and security is a shared responsibility.

**VI. Meeting Minutes (discussion and/or approval)**

A. March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2026 Board Meeting Minutes

**MOTION:** To approve the March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2026 Board Meeting minutes.

Board Member Name	Approved (Yes Vote)	Not Approved (No Vote)	Abstain
Director Chess	X		
Director Cornejo	X		
Director Long (Second)	X		
Director Mack (Motion)	X		
Director Morgan-Carter	X		
Vice President Martinez	X		

President Ceja	X		
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**VII. Financial Reports (discussion and/or approval)**

A. Financials ending February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2026.

- a. Director Chess commented on the shortfall in the February financials.
- b. CEO Ortiz shared that the deferred revenue that is expected by July 1<sup>st</sup> is upward of \$300,000.

**MOTION:** To approve Financials ending February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2026.

Board Member Name	Approved (Yes Vote)	Not Approved (No Vote)	Abstain
Director Chess (Second)	X		
Director Cornejo	X		
Director Long	X		
Director Mack	X		
Director Morgan-Carter	X		
Vice President Martinez (Motion)	X		
President Ceja	X		

**VIII. New Business**

A. Discussion and possible action regarding clear bag policy.

- CEO Ortiz stated that the clear bag policy was modeled after Cal Expo’s policy with the help of Mr. Maynard. CEO Ortiz is hoping to make this transition a smooth process for fair attendees and shared that staff are working to arrange bag checks at the entrance and supplement additional clear bags for visitors if needed. Staff is working with a sponsor to provide clear bags in kind.
- Director Long expressed his support for the policy.
- Director Cornejo noted the importance of ensuring the public is aware of the policy for their safety and noted the need to explore all avenues for communicating that attendees should arrive prepared.
- Mr. Maynard mentioned that clear bag policies are now an industry standard.
- CEO Ortiz confirmed that the policy is only for the fair. It is possible to implement the policy to all major events, which would require a bigger discussion. She also confirmed that we will promote the policy on social media, newsletters, and shuttle stop locations.

**MOTION:** To approve and implement the clear bag policy for the Ventura County Fair.

Board Member Name	Approved (Yes Vote)	Not Approved (No Vote)	Abstain
Director Chess	X		
Director Cornejo	X		
Director Long	X		
Director Mack (Motion)	X		
Director Morgan-Carter (Second)	X		
Vice President Martinez	X		
President Ceja	X		

**IX. Old Business**

**A. Surfer’s Point Update**

CEO Ortiz updated the board on the Surfers Point project. The city confirmed that the surf check spots will be painted this week along with the posting of signs next week.

**B. Derby Club – Update from the Ad Hoc Committee**

Director Mack stated that she and Vice President Martinez have met with stakeholders to discuss the Derby Club. They are continuing to gather information on the building to understand its various aspects. Director Mack requested a public meeting to hear input and ideas from staff. She would like to send out a request for information to entities who have ideas about the building and its use and clarified that what they are looking for is separate from the food and beverage contract. Director Mack and Vice President Martinez believe a conference center would be a viable alternative for the space.

**C. 2026 Fair Update**

**Megan Hook – Marketing and Sponsorships**

Ms. Hook provided a marketing and sponsorships update. Regarding the clear bag policy, she shared that a container company has donated their equipment for bag check-ins. The goal is to communicate and market the policy as much as possible to limit confusion among guests. Ms. Hook announced that pre-sale ticketing begins Friday, May 1, where the fair will cover fees through May 25. Season passes will be available from May 4-8 for \$28. VIP concert and rodeo tickets will go on sale on May 27. The Read and Ride program continues. Over 20 community members participated to judge the youth poster entries. The posters for 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> will be unveiled at next month’s board meeting. Marketing and advertising efforts for sponsors are underway, and our website will be updated to feature participating sponsors. An activation tent will be incorporated within the main gate layout, giving sponsors or community vendors an opportunity to engage guests through giveaways and activities as they approach the entrance gate. Toyota is sponsoring the main stage this year along with Large Livestock. Allied Beverages will be bringing in substantial assets and equipment on top of their sponsorship.

Emilee Inez - Exhibits Supervisor

Ms. Inez provided an exhibits update. She is continuing to work with the Strawberry Festival that is coming up in May on the strawberry shortcake booth which the Junior Fair Board are going to run. Ms. Inez was able to reduce the food loss from the strawberry shortcake booth operation last year. She also shared that the Junior Fair Board will be attending the LA County Fair. Ms. Inez mentioned that the goal of the Future of Agriculture Barn program will be to expose community members to the different career paths available in agriculture. She thanked Director Morgan-Carter for the invitation to the Ventura County Agricultural Summit, where Ms. Inez made valuable connections and gained a wealth of information. Director Morgan-Carter expressed how great the event was and thanked Ms. Inez for attending.

Madalyn Johnson – Concessions, Commercial and Community Manager

Ms. Johnson shared that the concessions department's deferred revenue is well up to six figures. New food items that will be featured this year include teriyaki chicken french fries, tiramisu cinnamon rolls, tanghulu, up to four additional vegan options, and much more. Ms. Johnson thanked Vice President Martinez and Mr. Maynard for their help in making progress with the health department. Vice President Martinez gave kudos to Ms. Johnson and Mr. Maynard for the comprehensive information packet that was shared with leadership.

Jason Amelio – Arena and VIP Manager

Mr. Amelio shared that several layout changes will be implemented to the arena. He looks forward to assisting with updates to pre-party, incorporating additions from our partners at Helm, and enhancing the set-up in the VIP area. Mr. Amelio has been working closely with Mr. Maynard and Ms. Johnson on camping and load-in plans, and shares that they are on a good path to utilizing that space to the best of their abilities.

CEO Ortiz shared that they continue to have weekly fair planning meetings.

**X. Board Correspondence – None**

**XI. Consent Agenda: Items hereunder on the Consent Agenda are considered routine, not requiring separate discussion and will be enacted in one motion. Individual items A, 1-3, are approved by the vote that approves the Consent Agenda, unless an item is pulled for separate consideration.**

- A. Agreements
  - 1. Standard Agreements
  - 2. Rental Agreements – Interim
  - 3. Concession Agreements

**MOTION:** To approve the consent agenda with items A, 1-3.

<b>Board Member Name</b>	<b>Approved (Yes Vote)</b>	<b>Not Approved (No Vote)</b>	<b>Abstain</b>
Director Chess	X		
Director Cornejo (Motion)	X		
Director Long (Second)	X		
Director Mack	X		
Director Morgan-Carter	X		
Vice President Martinez	X		
President Ceja	X		

**XII. CEO Report**

- CEO Ortiz shared that Ms. Pineda will be scheduling the youth poster presentations for city council meetings
- She thanked President Ceja for his assistance in securing a donated golf cart and trash pump for the fairgrounds

**XIII. President’s Report**

- President Ceja shared that he attended his first Junior Livestock Auction Committee meeting and looks forward to attending more meetings in the future
- He attended the Youth Poster Contest judging and expressed admiration for the talent displayed by the participants
- He shared that the contractors he represents are interested in participating in the fair and offering guidance for improvements on grounds

**XIV. Director’s Comments**

Director Chess

- Director Chess thanked the presenters and the staff for the information shared
- She also thanked her fellow board members for their work on the ad-hoc committees

Director Mack

- Director Mack thanked the staff for their enthusiasm and innovation when faced with new challenges

Director Cornejo

- Director Cornejo shared that updated policies will be presented to the board in next month’s meeting for approval
- She thanked Director Long for his collaboration on policy manual updates
- She mentioned that the policies she previously worked on with Director Morgan-Carter will also be included

Vice President Martinez

- Vice President Martinez thanked the team for their hard work

- She reported that she received wonderful feedback from members of the community regarding the collaboration between local businesses and the fair
- She shared how impressed she was with the dedication, talent, and quality of members that are on the Foundation board
- She stated that she is looking forward to the tour at the LA County Fair and hopes to learn more about their city outreach efforts, horticulture program, and the ways they engage their community spaces

Director Morgan-Carter

- Director Morgan-Carter expressed how great the team is
- She echoed Vice President Martinez’s sentiments about how great it is to hear the community speak highly of collaboration with the fair staff
- She looks forward to all the good work the staff and board are continuing to accomplish

Director Long

- Director Long commented on the efficiency of the staff and expressed appreciation for hearing about their accomplishments each month
- He looks forward to all the new additions to fair this year and believes we are in a good position moving forward
- He expressed how happy he is to work alongside his fellow board members on ad-hoc committees and shared his enthusiasm for the fair

**XV. Future Agenda Items**

1. Discussion and possible action regarding revisions to the policy manual

**XVI. Closed Session**

The Board is authorized to meet in Closed Session for the following reason:

1. Pursuant to Gov. Code Section 11126(e)(2), the Board is authorized to meet in Closed Session for the purpose of conferring with and receiving advice from legal counsel regarding pending litigation.

President Ceja convened into closed session at 10:53 a.m.

**XVII. Report Out of Closed Session – None**

President Ceja reconvened at 11:46 a.m. There was no reportable action taken during closed session.

**XVIII. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:47 a.m.

Submitted by: Karen Pineda  
Karen Pineda, Executive Assistant

Approved by: Heidi Ortiz  
Heidi Ortiz, CEO

Approved by: Guillermo R. Ceja Jr.  
Guillermo Rodriguez Ceja Jr., Board President